POL 14 VIETS

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EXCISE

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Dean Izard DATE 12/24/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 4798

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EXDIS

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1. EMBOFF HAD ELECTION EVE DINNER WITH FORMER PRIMIN[illegible]

2. BULK OF THE EVENING'S CONVERSATION CENTERED AROUND THE ELECTIONS AND THE REPORTED ARREST OF COLONEL PHAM VAN LIEU, NEWS OF WHICH EVERYONE HAD HEARD. CONSENSUS OF REACTION AMONG VIETNAMESE PRESENT WAS THAT TIMING WAS MALADROIT IN THE EXTREME. SOME (PARTICULARLY [illegible]) WERE PREPARED TO BELIEVE THAT LIEU HAD USED HIS OFFICIAL POSITION IN EFFORT

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TO PUSH THE CANDIDACY OF PHAN KHAC SUU AND PROBABLY MERITED DISCIPLINARY ACTION FOR ACTIVITIES. HE FELT, HOWEVER, THAT GVN WOULD HAVE BEEN WELL-ADVISED TO WAIT UNTIL AFTER ELECTION DAY TO ARREST HIM, THEREBY REDUCING THE POSSIBILITY OF AN

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UNFAVORABLE PRESS PLAY ABROAD. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION IN CAR EN ROUTE TO THE DINNER, [redacted] SPECULATED ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ARREST FOR THOSE CLOSE TO LIEU, SUCH CIVILIANS AS NGUYEN NGOC LINH, LE V N TIEN (AKA NHU PHONG), AND WHAT IT MIGHT DO TO GENERAL NGUYEN CHANH THI'S CHANCES OF RETURNING TO VIET-NAM FROM EXILE. (LIEU WAS ONE OF THI'S COLLABORATORS IN THE ABORTIVE COUP ATTEMPT OF NOVEMBER 11, 1960, SHARED HIS CAMBODIAN EXILE, AND HAS BEEN CLOSE TO THI EVER SINCE THEIR RETURN TO VIET-NAM). [redacted] SAID THAT THE STORY WAS CURRENT IN VIETNAMESE PRESS CIRCLES THAT THI HAD SENT A LETTER TO PHAN KHAC SUU ASSURING HIM OF HIS SUPPORT IN THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE AND THAT NEWS OF THIS LETTER WAS BEING CIRCULATED BY THE SUU CAMP. [redacted] HAD NOT SEEN THE LETTER AND HE WAS INCLINED TO DOUBT ITS EXISTENCE, THOUGH HE FELT IT NOT UNLIKELY THAT SUU CAMP WAS CALIMING THI SUPPORT EVEN IF IT HAD NOT ACTUALLY BEEN PLEDGED. b-1 ed

3. AFTER DINNER [redacted] SPOKE AT LENGTH TO EMBOFF OF THEIR IDEAS REGARDING THE FORM THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE AFTER THE ELECTIONS. (EACH EXPECTS A THIEU-KY VICTORY.) BOTH FEEL THAT THE PRESIDENT SHOULD HOLD HIMSELF ALOOF FROM DAY-TO-DAY POLITICS

GIVE AND TAKE BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT. PRIME MINISTER SHOULD TAKE THE BRUNT OF THIS, EXPOUNDING AND DEFENDING THE POLICIES OF THE EXECUTIVE AND SERVING AS THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION MAN. PRIME MINISTER WOULD THUS BE EXPENDABLE IF BITTER IMPASSE WERE TO DEVELOP BETWEEN EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE THUS PERMITTING PRESIDENT TO AVOID PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT.

4. [redacted] STATED HIS CONVICTION THAT SOME SORT OF GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION MUST BE ESTABLISHED BY THE MILITARY INCORPORATING REPRESENTATIVE ELEMENTS FROM THE CAMPS OF THE LEADING CIVILIAN CONTENDERS. HE ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THIS WILL REQUIRE A VERY DELICATE NEGOTIATION BETWEEN THIEU ON THE ONE HAND AND AT LEAST HUONG, SUU AND HA THUC KY ON THE OTHER. FROM THE TENOR OF HIS REMARKS IT SEEMSSC

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SAR[ ]HAS SOME
DOUBTS ABOUT THIEU'S ABILITY TO CONVINCE THESE PEOPLE OR THEIR
REPRESENTATIVESTO SERVE IN HIS GOVERNMENT: NEVERTHELESS,

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HE FEELS THAT THE EFFORT MUST BE MADE. ONE ADVANTAGE HE SEES IS THE FACT THAT THIEU WILL BE THE MAN NEGOTIATING. UNLIKE KY, THIEU HAS NOT STIRRED UP ANY MASSIVE ANIMOSITY DURING THE CAMPAIGN. HE FEELS THAT THE CIVILIANS WOULD AT LEAST BE WILLING TO SIT DOWN AND TALK WITH HIM.

5. [ ]IDEAS ABOUT THE FUTURE FORM OF GOVERNMENT LARGELY COINCIDED WITH [ ]THOUGH AT FIRST, HE SEEMED TO BE ARGUING IN FAVOR OF A GOVERNMENT OF "TECHNICIANS" WHO WOULD BE WILLING "TO WORK DAY AND NIGHT", WHO WOULD AVOID POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AND WOULD BE EXPENDABLE. HE MODIFIED HIS REMARKS LATER WHEN HE HEARD [ ]EXPOSITION. WHAT HE REALLY MEANT, HE SAID, WHEN DESCRIBING THE TYPE OF PERSON TO LOOK FOR AS MINISTERS WAS A"TECHNICIEN-POLITICIEN." b-1 ed

6. LATER, IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION, [ ]THAT HE HAD BEEN CONTACTED BY HUONG CAMP BEFORE CAMPAIGN HAD OFFICIALLY OPENED, AND BEEN ASKED IF HE WOULD BE WILLING TO SERVE AS PRIME MINISTER WITH HUONG IF HIS CANDIDACY WERE SUCCESSFUL. ARGUMENTATION USED WAS THAT HUONG-MAI THO TRUYEN TICKET HAD CATHOLIC-BUDDHIST BALANCE. WHAT WOULD BE NEEDED AFTER ELECTION WAS A NORTHERNER AS PRIME MINISTER AND THEY CONSIDERED

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[ ]AS AN ACCEPTABLE CANDIDATE. [ ]HAD NEITHER ACCEPTED NOR REJECTED THE BID, BUT HE TOLD HUONG'S EMISSARIES THAT HE CONSIDERED IT A BIT PREMATURE TO TALK ABOUT SUCH PLANS BEFORE CAMPAIGN WAS EVEN UNDERWAY.

7. [ ]SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT THE HUONG SUPPORTERS.

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HE FEELS THAT THEY ARE ON THE WHOLE VERY INTELLIGENT AND AGGRESSIVE. HE IS SOMEWHAT FEARFUL THAT IN THEIR DEVOTION TO HUONG THEY HAVE WORKED THEMSELVES UP TO THE POINT WHERE THEY ARE INCAPABLE OF VIEWING HIS DEFEAT AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE OF GVN RIGGING AND THAT THEIR EMOTIONAL REACTION TO A THIEU-KY VICTORY MIGHT TRIGGER A DECISION BY SOMEHLF THE MORE EXCITABLE TO GO OVER TO THE OTHER SIDE. THIS IS WHY, IN [redacted] VIEW, THE ELECTION EVE POLICY STATEMENT OF THE LIBERATION FRONT HAS CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE. IT IS PROBABLY DESIGNED AS AN APPEAL TO THESE ELEMENTS WHO WILL BE DISAPPOINTED WITH THE ELECTION RESULTS. b-1 ed

8. EMBOFF ASKED BOTH [redacted] FOR THEIR OPINIONS REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THE BUDDHIST EXTREMISTS ASSOCIATED WITH AN QUANG PAGODA. BOTH REPLIED THAT FUTURE GVN SHOULD ATTEMPT TO WORK WITH THESE ELEMENTS, RATHER THAN TRYING TO SPLIT THEM AS KY GOVT HAS. BOTH FEEL THAT THE OLD LEADERSHIP -- [redacted]

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IS HOPELESS, BEING EITHER DISCREDITED OR SO PREJUDICED TO THE POINT WHERE THEY CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE ANY HOPE OF RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP. OF THE OLDER GROUP OF BONZES, [redacted] SEES ONLY VAN HANH RECTOR MINH CHAU AND CHIEF CHAPLAIN THIEN AM PHAC AS PROVIDING ANY HOPE, AND PROBABLY NEW BLOOD WILL HAVE TO BE FOUND. ENTIRE PROCESS OF RE-ESTABLISHING A MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE BUDDHIST EXTREMISTS AND THE GVN IS VIEWED BY BOTH [redacted] AS AN EXTREMELY LONG TERM PROPOSITION.

9. COMMENT: [redacted] WAS HIS OLD URBANE, DAPPER SELF. FROM EVERYTHING HE SAID, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT HE IS STILL "MR. AVAILABLE" SHOULD ANYONE NEED A PRIME MINISTER -- AND HE MIGHT EVEN CONSENT TO SERVE IN SOME LESSER POSITION, SUCH AS FOREIGN MINISTER IF HE WERE ASKED IN THE RIGHT WAY. [redacted] PROJECTED HIS USUAL IMAGE OF A CEREBRAL, REASONABLE POLITICIAN WHO WOULD ALSO BE WILLING TO ACCEPT A POSITION IN THE

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FUTURE GOVERNMENT IF ONE WERE TO INVITE HIM. IN THE JOINT DISCUSSION WITH [redacted] OF THE FORM THE POST ELECTION GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTION, HE CLEARLY DOMINATED [redacted] AND IT WAS EVIDENT THAT HE HAD GIVEN THE MATTER MUCH THOUGHT AND THAT HE WAS REASONABLY CERTAIN OF HIS CONCLUSIONS.

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